

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

EDD Employment
Development
Department
State of California

COMMERCIAL ARTISTS (ANIMATORS, DESIGNERS, AND ILLUSTRATORS)



WHAT DOES A COMMERCIAL ARTIST DO?

COMMERCIAL ARTISTS have an exciting image. The field attracts creative people who love to draw or sculpt. In contrast to the fine arts, which concentrate on aesthetics and personal expression, commercial artwork emphasizes expression of specific ideas or concepts for employers and clients. Commercial Artists are classified by the type of work they do.

Commercial Artists typically perform the following tasks:

- Makes products, services, or ideas more appealing to the public by means of designs, illustrations, artwork, and graphic representations.
- Completes work by hand in various media such as oils, acrylics, silk-screen, and clay.

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INTEREST AREA
ARTISTIC



- Uses computers or offset printing presses to complete their jobs.
- Draws sample of finished layout and presents sample to art director for approval.
- Draws and prints charts, graphs, illustrations, and other artwork, using computer.
- Arranges layout based upon available space, knowledge of layout principles, and aesthetic design concepts.
- Produces still and animated graphic formats for on-air and taped portions of television news broadcasts, using electronic video equipment.
- Reviews final layout and suggests improvements as needed.

Fashion Artists create wearing apparel and accessory illustrations for newspapers, magazines, and catalogs.

Graphic Designers

- Design copy-layouts (pictures) for books, magazines, newspapers, television, product packaging, letterheads, brochures, organizational logos, and icons.
- Determine the size and arrangement of graphics to be used based on their knowledge of layout principles in printing and publishing.
- Write instructions for workers who prepare the final layout for printing.
- Design animated graphics for television using electronic video equipment.

Illustrators

- Create rough sketches and finished artwork to clarify, decorate, or substitute for spoken or written messages.
- Create graphics with pen and ink, watercolor, charcoal, oil, or the computer for various media.

Title Artists create lettering or icons for motion picture or television credits.

Medical and Scientific Illustrators

- Create graphics and three-dimensional models to demonstrate medical or biological concepts for fields such as anatomy, pathology, or surgery.
- Devise visual aids such as computer graphics to be used in teaching and research programs.

Motion Picture Cartoonists (Animation Artists)

- Draw cartoons or create computer generated images for animated films.
- Trace drawings onto clear acetate before they are painted or colored.
- Do conceptual drawings (storyboards) by hand or by computer.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Commercial Artists frequently use the following skills, knowledge, and abilities:

- Operation and Control – Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- Information Organization – Finding ways to structure or classify multiple pieces of information.
- Idea Generation – Generating a number of different approaches to problems.
- Idea Evaluation – Evaluating the likely success of an idea in relation to the demands of the situation.
- Fine Arts – Knowledge of theory and techniques required to produce, compose, and perform works of music, dance, visual arts, drama, and sculpture.
- Communications and Media – Knowledge of media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods including alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- Design – Knowledge of design techniques, principles, tools and instruments involved in the production and use of precision technical plans, blueprints, drawings, and models.

- Originality – The ability to come up with unusual or clever ideas about a given topic or situation, or to develop creative ways to solve a problem.
- Visualization – The ability to imagine how something will look after it is moved around or when its parts are moved or rearranged.
- Visual Color Discrimination – The ability to match or detect differences between colors, including shades of color and brightness.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

In most cases, the art department is small, consisting of art directors, perhaps an assistant director, and a small staff of design and production workers.

Work environments are brightly lit and temperature-controlled, with drawing tables and easels arranged for the quick and efficient production of commercial art. Because Commercial Artists work with a variety of people under sometimes stressful situations, they must be resilient, efficient, and able to relate well with people. Much of the design, illustration, layout, and paste-up work is done sitting down, sometimes for extended periods. The work generally requires visual acuity and color vision.

Union Membership

Some Commercial Artists are members of the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division and represents the broad occupational group, Artists and Related Workers, which includes Commercial Artists:

Estimated number of workers in 1998:	22,100
Estimated number of workers in 2008:	29,700
Projected Growth 1998-2008:	34.4%
Est. openings due to separations by 2008:	5,300
<i>These figures do not include self-employment.</i>	

The estimated number of job opportunities (for Artists and Related Workers, which includes Commercial Artists) from 1998 through 2008 is expected to total 12,900.

Trends

Self-employment as a free-lance Artist is common in the commercial art industry, especially for the experienced worker with a network of contacts. Competition is stiff for both the entrant and the seasoned Artist in the current job market. While the animation concepts (storyboards) are done in this country, much of the routine cell painting in computer graphics is done overseas. This practice further limits job opportunities for beginning Artists.

Artists skilled in the use of computers and other mechanized methods of graphic design are usually hired first. Job openings are more plentiful in the State's large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles or San Francisco since most firms with art departments are concentrated there.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Graphic Designers 2001 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$14.97 to \$25.46
Average hourly wage	\$21.19
Average annual wage	\$44,072

Source: *Occupational Employment Survey of Employers* by EDD/LMID.

Hours

Commercial Artists normally work standard hours and workdays. Overtime may be required to finish big projects or to meet unchangeable deadlines in the news or motion picture media.

Benefits

Vacation, sick leave, health related insurance, and retirement plans are common benefits for full-time employees; however, those who work on a contract basis usually do not enjoy these benefits.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THIS JOB?

Education and Training

The talent to communicate effectively through artistic means is the basic requirement for success. However, talent alone does not guarantee employment. Artists must learn styles, techniques, and types of media that allow them to

translate ideas into finished art projects. Formal training programs may range from two to four years of academic or vocational art education. It is important to select a school where students train under the direction of professional, working artists.

Both generalized and specialized training are important. Commercial Artists need a solid base in design and color, practice in drawing and lettering, and knowledge of photography and reproduction techniques. Aspiring Commercial Artists also need the latest computer-graphic techniques. Career preparation in a specific field, such as Design or Fashion Illustration is also very important. For example, the screen cartoonists' union sponsors an institute offering basic and advanced course work in animation techniques. Such specialized training should be enhanced by hands-on training for both professional development and networking contacts.

Licensing and Certification

Commercial Artists are not required to be licensed or certified.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is not a formal requirement for this occupation. Commercial Artists usually participate in life-long learning programs, especially computer training, to stay current in their field.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Most Commercial Artists work for advertising agencies, organizations with art or publicity departments, publishers, and television and film studios. Free-lance Illustrators are frequently hired to create illustrations in styles that cannot be done by the staff. Beginning Illustrators may successfully compete with established professionals for these assignments.

Artists need a portfolio, which contains at least ten samples that exhibit practical applications along with creative ability and technique. Students and recent graduates should register with school placement centers and network through professional associations.

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private

firms are listed in the yellow pages under Artists-Commercial. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Commercial Artists may work several years before acquiring the skills and reputation for higher paying jobs with more responsibilities. They may advance to the position of Art Director or become director of projects within an agency or organization. Many free-lance Artists work as consultants while continuing in their craft.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Society of Illustrators
128 East 63rd Street
New York, NY 10021-7303
(212) 838-2560
Fax: (212) 838-2561
www.societyillustrators.org

Graphic Artists Guild
90 John Street, Suite 403
New York, NY 10038-3202
(212) 791-3400
(800) 500-2672
www.gag.org

Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists,
Local 839
4729 Lankershim Boulevard
North Hollywood, CA 91602-1864
(818) 766-7151
Fax: (818) 506-4805
www.mp839.org

National Cartoonists Society
1133 W. Morse Blvd., Suite 201
Winter Park, FL 32789
(212) 627-1550
www.reuben.org

Employment Projections by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/occup$/OES$.htm)

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Fashion Designers	No. 185
Interior Designers	No. 189

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)

Fine Artists, Including Painters, Sculptors, and Illustrators	27-1013
Graphic Designers	27-1024

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)

Painters and Illustrators	27-1013.01
Cartoonists	27-1013.03
Graphic Designers	27-1024.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)

Artists and Related Workers	34035
Designers, Except Interior Designers	34038

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)

Fashion Artist	141.061-014
Graphic Designer	141.061-018
Illustrator	141.061-022
Illustrator, Medical and Scientific	141.061-026
Cartoonist, Motion Pictures	141.081-010